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metis : On the Surface
associated publications

INTERSTICES 16



Publications

exhibition featured as part of article on Arkitektiskolen Aarhus
Photography by Gert Skaerlund

Domus, Italy

Issue 901, May 2015

Expanding Surfaces
scholarly review of exhibition by Claudia Carbone

Architectural Research Quarterly, UK

Volume 19, number 2, 2015

The Exhibition as an "Urban Thing"
invited paper by Mark Dorrian + Adrian Hawker

Interstices, Journal of Architecture and Related Arts, New Zealand

Issue 16, December 2015

On the Surface
interactive Prezi publication

Drawing On, UK
(forthcoming 2018)

0-7-968-1000-0

PHUS SCHOOL
ARCHITECTURE

Arthur School of Architecture
1965 as an alternative to the
verable Royal Danish Art
Fine Arts in C

ingledge (Darden) in 1978. The Academy was the first school in Denmark to be founded in a new school, which had a design philosophy, the choice between the capital and the largest city. The new school was an academy, modelled after the one in Copenhagen. Aarhus is one of the largest cities with the most architects in the city are in some architecture firms, our school. Some of the largest architectural firms in the world, including architecture offices, are in Aarhus. In October this year we will have a 50th anniversary. We focus on education that is in line with our students, and we have conversations with students every year and we employ many future architects. We have a lot of people having famous professors that professors who engage with society. We have been the school for 50 years, and we are a solving society and making the best of what architecture can do for people. It is a good idea to be a part of a better place. We focus on specific areas: sustainable architecture, architecture, and we focus on them in a historic way. Our education is based on three pillars: architecture, design, and society. 1989



Sotto: la retrospettiva "On the Surface" (2014) sul lavoro dello studio Metis (diretto dai guest professor Mark Dorian e Adrian Hawke). In mostra, sette progetti, modelli e disegni di diverse scale erano appoggiati su un grande tappeto, con i disegni dello studio, di 16 x 10,5 m realizzato con...

- Above: Cocoon is a pavilion made of bamboo, designed by Aarhus students with the CARE School of Architecture, India. It was built in 2014 in South India as part of an exchange programme, and merges digital techniques with a crafts-related understanding of the nature of local materials.

Below: "On the Surface" was a retrospective of the work of the Scottish artist Matis. Founded by Aarhus guest professors Mark Durian and Adrian Mawker. Seven projects on various scales were shown with models, and drawings were laid out in the form of a vast carpet (16 x 10.5 m), made in collaboration with ego, the Danish carpet maker



productive introspections
a literary architecture
digital chorographies

arq

architectural research quarterly



COVER
Deconstructed
storyboard technique,
combining video with
site. See pp 110–122

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CAMBRIDGE
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The viewer immersed in multiple modes of representation

Following the drawing on the ground

Expanding surfaces

Claudia Carbone

The experience of the exhibition *On the Surface* – a retrospective of the work of Metis, the Edinburgh-based atelier of Mark Dorian and Adrian Hawker, presented in the exhibition space of The Aarhus School of Architecture – is choreographed as a walk over superimposed fragments of architectural representations. This action of walking, of following the drawing on the ground, enables the erasure of the specific time/place chronotopes of the seven exhibited projects, allowing new itineraries to be drawn through the crossing of this complex context.

Metis is an atelier for art, architecture, and urbanism founded in 1997 with the aim of connecting architectural teaching, research, and practice. Their work focuses on the city and the complex ways in which it is imagined, inhabited, and representationally encoded. They seek to produce rich, multi-layered works that resist immediate consumption and that are instead gradually unfurled over time through interaction with them. Their approach is concerned with establishing a poetic but critical approach to the city that is sensitive to its cultural memory but is also articulated in relation to its possible futures. The exhibition was curated by Karen Kjærgaard, and Richard Collins and Aikaterini Antonopoulou assisted Metis with its development.

Metis organise the documentation of the exhibited projects as an installation within a printed carpet surface measuring 16m x 10.5m, produced in collaboration with Jan Magdal Poulsen and Karen Lund Hansen from the Danish carpet manufacturer, ege. The carpet is furnished with seven trestles that support the representations of the individual projects. Each of these

trestles defines a room, a space of exploration. Upon each trestle, two sheets of glass contain and frame one of seven exhibited projects. Each project is described through three panels of drawings, which are

suspended within the double layer of glass. The upper glass surface also serves as a kind of horizon line upon which a model representation of the project sits. The spatial configuration of the



trestles relates in content to – and designates a specific relation within – the drawing on the floor or surface. When carefully walked upon and perceived, the drawing underneath your feet attracts you in the same way that cartographies of the sky often do. This inverted ceiling draws the viewer from one place to another through a force field of multiple projections, each of them with their unique vanishing points and horizons. The projections do not seem to interlock; they are possible arrangements or assemblages that aim at achieving the sensation of being situated in a frozen moment of the dynamic constellation – stargazing. Other actions could be to look in, to zoom in, to explore details, or else to follow structures in this rich surface, like a bird's-eye view of the earth, observing moments from an empowered vantage point.

Approaching each table, you locate yourself in the designated position that the orientation of the trestles facilitates. This then refers to an order where the experience of each project, or table, can be associated with the system of display cabinets that furnish a library or museum. The orientation of the body delimits a space for examination of the delicate drawings, and also defines spatial relations between the spatial planes in the floor drawing and the proximity of the detail in the dense information that each representation positions close to the viewer's eyes. This particular position then offers an examination and questioning of the limits of the projects. They re-emerge, amongst others, in the distance, disturbed and distorted by the overlay of the models and the viewer's own image, which is doubled through the reflective effects of the glass surfaces.

The focused reading of the drawings and the position of the model is an experience equivalent to that of witnessing an architect's working table or studying a cabinet displaying samples of fossils or stones in a museum of natural history.

Here, close-up, the models are the most powerful means of representation. Their placement upon the tables engages in such a way that the eagerness to touch them is nearly impossible to resist. This overwhelming desire is only made possible by the inviting display in which, because the models are not restricted within vitrines, haptic experience is unhindered. The models are pieces

architectural research quarterly

arq

Innovative in conception, unique in breadth and generously illustrated, this pace-setting quarterly publication from Cambridge University Press links, on a global scale, the worlds of architectural practice and research. **arq** regularly includes extensive peer-reviewed sections on design, history, theory, construction, environmental design, education and practice – as well as structures, urbanism and documents. These are supplemented by letters, reports, reviews and an annual index. Each issue opens with a leader and closes with insight, a personal end-piece. In its eighteen year history, **arq** has published work from all over the world: from Chile to Sweden and from Japan to the Netherlands – with a strong representation from the United Kingdom and United States. **arq**, like architecture itself, is all-embracing and written by and for both practitioners and academics. It provides an outlet for all those who wish to disseminate their work to an international audience.

materiality, fragility, and detail. They become objects that you want to possess.

Taken together, the seven projects exhibited display a complex inter-relation between architectural speculation, site, and brief. In scale, the projects range from landscape, through cityscape, to the dimensions of the body. Six of the seven projects both question and respond to competition briefs. They include projects for the Great Egyptian Museum, Cairo, Egypt (2003), the Nam June Paik Gallery, Seoul, South Korea (2003), and for a Bath House and Spa Hotel, Liepaja, Latvia (2014). These are site specific and articulated in accordance with their environment. The only exception is the installation piece, *Laputa*, which was developed in relation to the 1726 text of *Gulliver's Travels* by Jonathan Swift.

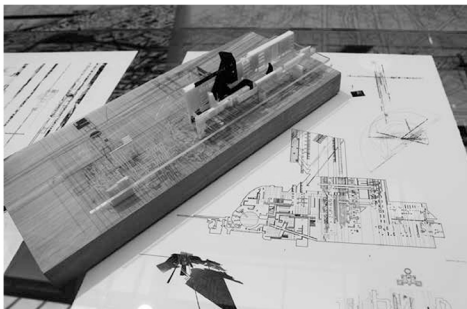
One project, *Micro-Urbanism*, can be seen as an epitome of both the strategy behind the whole exhibition and the particular character of Metis's approach and creative practice. In this, the spectator is presented with an overload of architectural references distributed through multiple means of representation. The project operates on both introverted and extroverted levels, enriched by its own trajectories, out of and within bounds, theories, histories, narratives, anecdotes and quotes that engage the viewer in a never-ending architectural endeavour. This project is also the one that interweaves the exhibition, becoming an interconnecting and almost tectonic tool. It appropriates and covers the entire background of the floor drawing.

On The Surface: Metis: Mark Dorrian + Adrian Hawker ran at Aarhus School of Architecture, Denmark from 10 October to 14 November 2014.

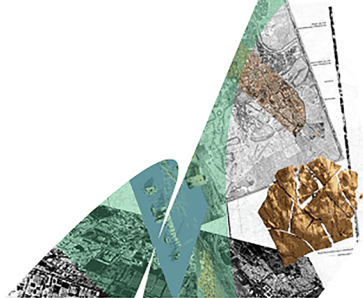
Claudia Carbone is Teaching Associate Professor at Aarhus School of Architecture.

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The Urban Thing

Edited by Mark Dorrian & Adrian Hawker
Project Medley, Media-architecture

INTERSTICES

JOURNAL OF ARCHITECTURE AND RELATED ARTS

Interstices 16 The urban thing

Edited by Andrew Douglas and Hannah Hopewell

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The Urban Thing

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Published: December 2015

INTERSTICES

JOURNAL OF ARCHITECTURE AND RELATED ARTS

The exhibition as an "urban thing"

Mark Dorrian, Adrian Hawker

Abstract

This paper presents and discusses the design of a retrospective exhibition of the work of Metis, shown at the Arkitektiskolen, Aarhus, Denmark between 10 October and 14 November 2014 and at Edinburgh College of Art between 27 March and 6 April 2015. Making reference to Bruno Latour's distinction between 'objects' and 'things', as developed in his influential article 'Why has critique run out of steam?' (2004), it speculates on what it would mean to conceptualise an exhibition as a 'thing' – that is, as a gathering of relations – and how this might affect our approach to it. In the case of the Metis exhibition, which was titled 'On the Surface', this issue is related to the agency of the large-scale textile drawing that covered the floor of the gallery, forming a kind of raft within it upon which visitors walked. Acting as a gathering space for both exhibits and visitors, the drawing was constituted through a complex of representational modalities, which put the seven exhibited projects into play with one another in such a way as to resist their stabilisation and resolution into a sequence of objects.

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The Exhibition as an “urban thing”

Mark Dorrian, Adrian Hawker

Metis: Mark Dorrian + Adrian Hawker
On The Surface
Arkitektkolen Aarhus, Denmark: 10 October – 14 November 2014
Edinburgh College of Art, Scotland, UK: 27 March – 6 April 2015
Assistants: Alkaterini Antonopoulou and Richard Collins
Curator: Karen Kjærsgaard
Floor textile manufactured by Ege, Denmark

What would it be to construct an exhibition that worked as a “thing” – and more particularly as an “urban thing”, with all the connotations of density, encounter, transformation and mediation that the term might imply? Bruno Latour’s influential essay “Why has critique run out of steam?” gives us some clues. In this text, he discusses the relation between what he describes as “matters of fact” and “matters of concern”. While the two phrases might at first sight appear to sit in opposition to one another, Latour characterises the former as a specific, reduced, case of the latter: “Matters of fact are only very partial and, I would argue, very polemical, very political renderings of matters of concern and only a subset of what could also be called *states of affairs*” (Latour 2004:232).

Developing his argument via Heidegger, Latour goes on to introduce the distinction between “objects” and “things”, categories that he associates respectively with his two matters of fact and concern. So, where objects are categorised as “matters of fact” (determined, decided, mastered, inert), things are instead sites where complex “gatherings” of relations occur. Latour cites the by now well-known etymology that links the word “thing” to an assembly or parliament – thus his comment that a “thing is, in one sense, an object out there and, in another sense, an *issue* very much *in* there, at any rate, a *gathering*” (Latour 2004: 233). It is not the case, however – and this is in keeping with Latour’s earlier description of facts as particularised instances of more expansive concerns – that some entities are, in themselves, “objects” and some are “things”. Instead, he seems to tell us, they are all things, and we should understand them as such, but we

frequently – perhaps usually – misrecognise them as objects. The object/thing distinction thus comes to be about the kind of relations we have with entities and our attitude to them, or better, the way we attend to them.

At the same time, however, Latour’s argument implies that some things, in the way they are given to us in complexity, are more resistant to being resolved into objects than others. So, at one point, drawing on the work of the philosopher of science Ian Hacking, he gives the example of a “banal rock” (an object) as opposed to dolomite (a thing). “The first”, he writes, “can be turned into a matter of fact, but not the second. Dolomite is so beautifully complex and entangled that it resists being treated as a matter of fact” (Latour 2004: 234). Another example he puts forward is the space-shuttle-Columbia disaster, which he characterises as the transformation of something that had previously appeared to be an object into something that could only be understood as a thing: a catastrophic unfolding of relations that already existed within and structured the vessel, resulting in a field of debris that could never be mistaken for the kind of entity that we normally describe as an “object”.

On The Surface was a retrospective exhibition of work by Metis, designed for the gallery of the Arkitektkolen Aarhus in Denmark, which ran from 10 October to 14 November 2014. Seven projects, spanning twelve years, were shown in, stretching from Metis’s 2002 book, *Urban Cartographies*, to a competition project developed in 2014 for a spa hotel in Liepāja, Latvia. Any exhibition that involves a number of works is of course inevitably a gathering of a complex kind that brings together not only exhibits, within which multiple relations are already enfolded, but also people (producers, curators, technicians, visitors, etc.). However, this is not to say that this ‘thinginess’ remains in evidence, for more often than not it is systematically suppressed – for example by curatorial approaches that take as their imperative the pre-eminence of the pristine exhibited object.

In the case of ‘On the Surface’, we sought to articulate the ‘thinginess’ of the exhibition and make it legible through establishing a display strategy whereby all that was shown would exist on horizontal, as opposed to vertical, surfaces. In the first instance, this meant engaging the overall

space of the gallery with a large floor drawing, which was manufactured for the exhibition as a textile surface. This established a zone, a kind of mat, within the building that acted as a space of encounter and gathering place for both projects and visitors to the exhibition. Upon this zone, not only did people interact with each other and the displayed work, but also the projects themselves encountered one another in new and reconfigured ways. It was crucial for the exhibition idea that visitors could step onto the floor drawing and be visually immersed in its laterally spreading constructed field, thereby losing the kind of distanced relation that would allow the object of vision to be optically encompassed and settled.

The floor drawing was composed of representations of the seven projects, deriving from different media – some photographic, some drawing-based, some digitally generated. Stripped as they were of stable reference points (common lines of projection, scale relations, etc.) that would allow them to solidify as a “ground”, they came to interact with one another as an array of contingent forms. Here the fluctuation between disparate scales was echoed in the interplay of effects of surface and depth that was produced – the sense of a flatness that was, at the same time, experienced as a swarming, mobile, and thick space. This for us recalled baroque representations of the heavens, such as those of Andreas Cellarius, whose atlas is referred to in the *Micro-Urbanism* project that was exhibited. Situated in this force field, visitors were invited to navigate, explore and play with its constitutive array of relations. As Claudia Carbone has written of walking on this surface in a recently published review of the exhibition: “This action ... of following the drawing on the ground, enables the erasure of the specific time/place chronotopes of the seven exhibited projects, allowing new itineraries to be drawn through the crossing of this complex context” (Carbone 2015: 107–109, 107).

One effect of the floor drawing was to spatially distribute the projects in the gallery space, establishing territories that were then occupied by display tables, each holding three sheets of drawings within a double layer of glass, on top of which was also positioned a model. These, acting as anchors within the large-scale field, set up smaller and more intimate spaces that demanded a mode of closely situated reading. Here the eye was drawn toward the elevated surface of the table, concentrating vision while at the same time leaving open a peripheral zone that opened onto the expanses of the floor drawing below.

Because everything in the exhibition existed on a horizontal surface, with the tabletop height calibrated to a datum line of text running around the gallery wall, the experience of it radically transformed with shifts in height and angle of vision. When the eye was lowered to the level of the tabletops, the graphic surfaces tended to disappear, producing a reading of the exhibition as an arrangement of island-like models constellated within the space of the gallery. As the eye rose, however, and the viewing angle increased, the volumetrics of the models and the tables progressively collapsed, until they were fully absorbed into the complex differentials of the graphic surface.

Key to the exhibitionary strategy that motivated ‘On the Surface’ was the idea of an approach to each project that dispersed what would otherwise appear as an object through an array of spaces, scales and representational modalities that sat in a “flat”, non-hierarchical relation to one another and could never coalesce into a single, privileged artifact. Under these conditions, none of the projects on display were ever identifiable in an exhaustive way with a specific location or object in the exhibition. Instead, the projects emerged as *things* – which is to say, as gatherings that participated in, and interacted with, the larger complex gathering of the “urban thing”, as it was constituted by the exhibition itself.

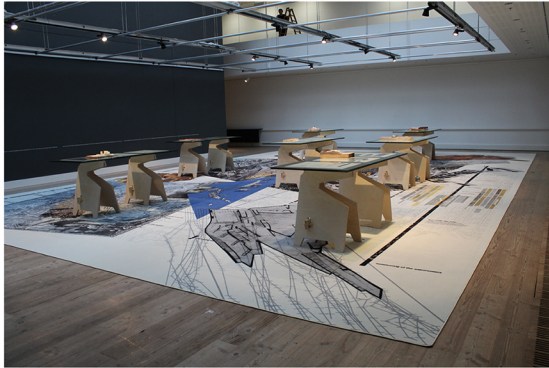


Fig. 03
Metis: Mark Dorrian and Adrian Hawker, *On the Surface* [Low level view]



Fig. 04
Metis: Mark Dorrian and Adrian Hawker, *On the Surface* [Territories and tables]

Figures:

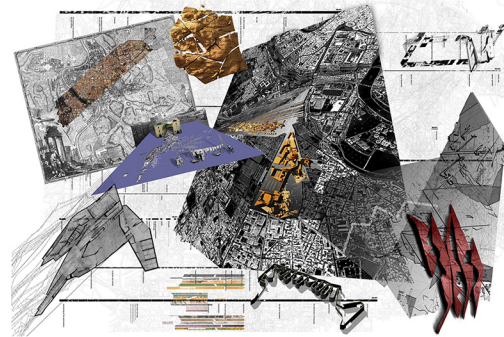


Fig. 01
Metis: Mark Dorrian and Adrian Hawker, *On the Surface* [Plan of floor drawing]



Fig. 02
Andreas Cellarius, *The Southern Hemisphere and Its Heavens* [From the *Atlas Coelestis seu Harmonia Macrocosmica* (Amsterdam, 1660)]



Fig. 05
Metis: Mark Dorrian and Adrian Hawker, *On the Surface* [View with Egyptian Museum project in foreground]



Fig. 06
Metis: Mark Dorrian and Adrian Hawker, *On the Surface* [View from balcony]



Fig. 07
Metis: Mark Dorrian and Adrian Hawker, *On the Surface* [View from balcony]



Fig. 08
Metis: Mark Dorrian and Adrian Hawker, *On the Surface* [Cabinet of the City, Municipal Art Gallery, Rome]



Fig. 09
Metis: Mark Dorrian and Adrian Hawker, *On the Surface* [Egyptian Museum, Cairo]



Fig. 11
Metis: Mark Dorrian and Adrian Hawker, *On the Surface* [Micro-urbanism, Parliament Hill, Ottawa, Canada]

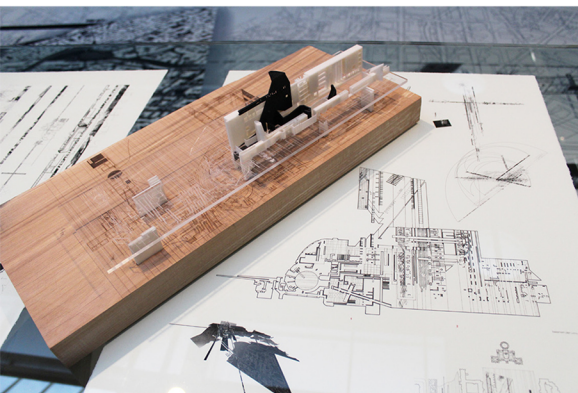


Fig. 10
Metis: Mark Dorrian and Adrian Hawker, *On the Surface* [Micro-urbanism, Parliament Hill, Ottawa, Canada]



Fig. 12
Metis: Mark Dorrian and Adrian Hawker, *On the Surface* [Installation in Sculpture Court, Edinburgh College of Art]



Fig. 13
Metis: Mark Dorrian and Adrian Hawker, *On the Surface* [Edge of floor drawing with boots]

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Figs. 03, 10 Mark Dorrian
Figs. 04 - 9, 11 Gert Skærhøj Andersen
Fig. 12 Adrian Hawker
Fig. 13 Ella Chmielewska